

CLAIMS

1. A tarpaulin system for an open-top cargo hold on a vehicle, the system comprising:
 - a tarpaulin having first and second ends, the first end of the tarpaulin being fixedly connected proximate one end of the cargo hold;
 - a plurality of bows for supporting said tarpaulin and moving said tarpaulin over the cargo hold, each of said bows having an interior section with opposing ends extending outwardly therefrom;
 - a plurality of fasteners for detachably securing said bows to said tarpaulin;
 - a cable;
 - a plurality of connectors attached to said cable, each of the plurality of connectors having a cable gripping area and a bow attachment area, whereby a bow may be removable attached to the bow attachment area.
- 15 2. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 1, wherein the plurality of bows includes a terminal bow that is fixedly connected to the cable.
3. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 2, wherein the plurality of bows further includes at least one intermediate bow that is slidably

connected to the cable, said intermediate bow being positioned between the terminal bow and the first end of the tarpaulin.

4. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 1, wherein each bow defines at least one first hole therein and the tarpaulin defines at least one eye therein; whereby the first hole of the bow is aligned with the eye in the tarpaulin; and one of the fasteners is received through the aligned first hole and eye to secure the tarpaulin to the bow.
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- 10 5. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 4, wherein the fastener comprises a bolt receivable through the aligned first hole and eye; and a nut for securing the bolt in the aligned first hole and eye.
- 15 6. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 1, wherein the cable gripping area of each connector comprises a cable follower for engaging the cable and the bow attachment area includes a bracket having a mounting flange for engaging an end of the bow.
- 20 7. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 6, wherein the cable follower is fixedly attached to the cable, and the bracket is removably attached to the bow end.

8. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 7, wherein the mounting flange has a longitudinal axis and the cable follower has a longitudinal axis; and the longitudinal axis of the mounting flange lies substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the cable follower.

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9. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 8, wherein the mounting flange is substantially U-shaped in cross-section.

10. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 9, wherein the mounting flange has a base and spaced-apart parallel side walls that extend normal to and outwardly from the base and one of the ends of one of the bows rests on the base of the mounting flange and is confined between the side walls of the mounting flange.

15 11. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 10, wherein each of the plurality of bows has a second hole therein spaced from the first hole; and the base of one of the mounting brackets has an aperture therein; and the aperture and second hole are axially aligned when the one end of the bow rests on the base of the mounting flange.

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12. The tarpaulin system as defined in Claim 11, wherein each connector further includes a bolt receivable through the aligned second hole and aperture; and a nut for engaging the bolt to secure the one end of the rib to the mounting flange.

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13. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 7, wherein the cable follower of each connector is substantially C-shaped in cross-section.

- 10 14. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 13, wherein the cable follower of each connector comprises an upper section and a lower section which define a cavity therebetween; and the cavity lies substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the cable follower; and wherein the cable is received through the cavity of the cable follower.

- 15 15. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 14, wherein each of the upper and lower sections have a terminal edge; and wherein the terminal edges of the upper and lower sections are substantially parallel and spaced apart and define a slot therebetween.

- 20 16. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 15, wherein the slot lies substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the cable follower.

17. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 16, wherein the upper and lower sections of the cable follower are selectively movable toward each other, whereby the width of the cavity between the upper and lower sections reduced to narrow the slot in the cable follower.

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18. The tarpaulin system as defined in claim 1, further comprising a sleeve mounted on each end of each bow, the sleeve being manufactured from a material which reduces friction between an upper edge of the cargo hole and the ends of each bow.

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19. A method of repairing a damaged tarpaulin system for an open-top cargo hold for a vehicle, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a tarpaulin system which includes a tarpaulin; a plurality of bows for supporting said tarpaulin over the cargo hold; at least one movable cable; and a plurality of connectors for detachably connecting said bows to said cable;

locating a damaged bow within the tarpaulin system;
disengaging the connectors from the damaged bow; whereby the damaged bow is detached from the connector;

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maintaining the connection between the connector and the cable;

withdrawing the damaged bow from the tarpaulin system;
providing an undamaged replacement bow;
attaching the undamaged replacement bow to the connector
that remained attached to the cable.

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20. The method of repairing a damaged tarpaulin system as defined in
claim 19, further comprising the step of:

maintaining undamaged bows in position while the damaged
bow is being replaced.

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21. The method of repairing a tarpaulin system as defined in claim 19,
further comprising the step of:

maintaining the position of the cable on a drive wheel and a
follower wheel while the damaged bow is being replaced.

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22. The method of repairing a tarpaulin system as defined in claim 19,
further comprising the step of:

maintaining the tension on the cable while the damaged bow is being
replaced.